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Minutes of the Meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council held in the meeting room Belbroughton on Monday 13th December 2010

Present : Cllrs J Bradley, T Cherry, K Green, L Hardcastle, A Ince, T Jones, J Kitson, P Peacock, P Shotton, C Scurrrell, J Westley and S Wright.

In attendance: Mrs C Limm, Clerk. County Cllr Ed Moore and 4 residents also attended.

367/10 Apologies : Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Deeley and Hadley.

368/10 Declarations of interest : In relation to possible investments recommended by Prosperity, Cllr Kitson declared a prejudicial interest since he was associated with the company; Cllr Bradley declared a personal interest since he used the company for personal financial advice.

369/10 Police Matters

Sgt. Millwood attended the meeting and reported on incidents in Belbroughton in October and November. Since the number of incidents was considerably more than usual, Councillors asked Sgt Millwood if this increase was in line with trends elsewhere or if there was any explanation for this apparent increase in thefts and burglaries in the Belbroughton area. Sgt Millwood said that he would ask PC Lord to attend the next meeting with a follow up report on this. Cllr Scurrrell asked if the Council could also be given regular reports about Fairfield.

Enforcement of speed limits was also discussed. Sgt Millwood said the at the police's objective was to visit Hartle Lane with a speed gun at least 6 times a year but this obviously depended on staff availability and other commitments.

Susan Jones asked if Hartle Lane could have a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator. Sgt Millwood undertook to speak to the local co-ordinator but thought that Hartle Lane was not currently covered. Ms Jones said that she would be willing to consider volunteering for this role.

370/10 Minutes of the meeting on 1st November 2010 – the minutes were agreed and were signed by the Chairman.

371/10 Reports

Chairman

Cllr Bradley said that the working group set up to consider the issues involved in splitting the Council had held two constructive meetings. A report would be presented to the Council at its January meeting.

A well attended meeting had been held to consult residents about the design for the housing development at the jewellery factory, Hartle Lane. The developers planned to involve the Council before submitting revised plans to the planning department. The Clerk was asked to make further enquiries about the calculation of S106 funds and whether the Parish Council could be involved in the allocation of this money to local projects.

Finance meeting

Cllr Green reported briefly on the Finance meeting held on 15th November. The Minutes were noted.

Planning meetings Cllr Ince reported on the planning meeting held on 15th November. The Minutes were noted.

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Clerk's report

The Clerk said that an updated edition of the electoral register would shortly be available. Councillors were entitled to a copy of the full register if they wished. An application form was available from the Clerk.

372/10 Finance

i. The Council discussed the draft budget for 2011/12 recommended by the Finance Committee. Cllr Green said that on current projections the Council should have a small surplus this year rather than a deficit as previously expected. The key issue for the Council was whether to hold the precept at the same level as in 2010/11 or increase it by a small amount to make some provision for inflation. Some costs would inevitably rise, like staff costs, so a freeze on the precept would mean making spending cuts in other areas to compensate. The Council agreed to accept the budget as drafted and to hold the precept at £55,000 for 2011/12. There would be a final opportunity to review this at the January meeting if required in the light of significant new information.

ii. The Council had delegated to the Finance Committee the scope to invest £50,000 of the Council's capital in a long term bond. No suitable bonds had been identified so the Committee had reviewed other options and taken further advice from Mark Pritchard of Prosperity. Cllr Kitson outlined the product suggested by Mark Pritchard which was an investment fund managed by Gartmore. This carried a small risk to the capital but whilst minimising risk would give a more balanced and diverse portfolio. The Council noted that around £140,000 of capital was currently in a Scottish Widows notice account paying 1.75% interest. This money was therefore currently losing value. It was also unwise to have this amount in one account. There was no fixed term for the Gartmore investment so the money would be accessible, if needed. However, there was a management charge which meant that this was not a short term investment; the funds should ideally be left for several years.

iii. The Council agreed to invest £50,000 in the Gartmore product and asked the Clerk to make the necessary arrangements.

iv. A note of accounts for payment for December was tabled by the Clerk. The Council agreed the payments.

373/10 Traffic and transport

The Clerk had circulated a note about recent developments, including a meeting with County Highways and the Safer Roads Partnership. The County Council had responded to the Parish Council's list of possible sites for a mobile Vehicle Activated Sign to say that the sites would not be acceptable since most had another VAS in close proximity. The County Council would not object to moving the first sign in Hartle Lane to the village entrance if the Parish Council paid for this. Representatives of the Safer Roads Partnership had undertaken to raise Hartle Lane at their next Operations forum. It was agreed that the Parish Council would consider this issue again when the outcome of the Operations forum meeting was known.

The Council noted the consultation by WCC on the County local transport plan but had no specific comments.

374/10 Meeting Room Consultation

The Clerk had circulated a summary of the responses to the consultation document. She said that a number of residents had provided detailed comments and she suggested that these should be circulated for all the Councillors to read. Cllr Bradley said that there was an issue about taking a firm decision about the meeting room whilst splitting the Council was under consideration, but the working group had suggested that these issues could be considered in parallel for the time being.

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It was agreed that Councillors would read the detailed responses and that the Council would consider the meeting room again at its February meeting. In the meantime, since the estimated costs of improving the room had been queried by some respondents, it was agreed that the Clerk would seek a further estimate from a local builder. Alternative venues for the Council to meet could also be explored further without commitment. Cllr Peacock had made enquiries in Fairfield - the village hall was not currently available on Monday evenings but the Barton room was; the school was currently unavailable because of building work. Cllr Kitson had visited Belbroughton Rec. to see a room that was currently unused and which might be suitable, with some refurbishment, for Council use. He was asked to explore this option further and Cllr Cherry was asked to find out if Belbroughton school might be available for meetings.

375/10 Maintenance of public rights of way

The report and recommendations about maintenance of public rights of way made by the parish footpath wardens were noted and agreed by the Council. The Clerk was asked to forward this response to Worcestershire County Council. The Council expressed their thanks to Pam and Peter Bridge, the footpath wardens, and to Lynn and Paul Hardcastle, the footpath wardens designate, for their hard work on this and the excellent report they had produced.

376/10 Maintenance and Improvements

The Clerk had circulated a note of the work agreed in principle at a site meeting with the tree officer from Bromsgrove District Council. The District had not yet sent a formal approval notice. The Parish Council approved the work and the quote provided by Mr Mann subject to any further discussions necessary with BDC.

The Clerk said that two residents had complained about dog mess on the path from the Glebe to the school and had asked for the Parish Council to take some action. The Council noted that there were dog bins at both ends of the path and considered that no further action was appropriate.

377/10 Parish Council Election material

This item was deferred.

378/10 Correspondence received

A note of correspondence received since the last meeting was circulated for information.

379/10 Councillors Items

None raised on this occasion.

380/10 New Year meal

Cllr Ince suggested the Swan in Fairfield as the venue for the Parish Council dinner on 31 January. She was asked to explore this and to circulate proposals for the Council to consider.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

Signed.....Chairman